

Growth in tourism means more opportunities for chefs

A rise in local tourism figures and the subsequent growth of the hospitality industry suggests significant employment opportunities for South African chefs. This is according to Deon Roets, academic manager of Capsicum Culinary Studio.

According to an April 2013 report from Statistics South Africa there was a 10,2% increase in international tourist arrivals - from 8,339,354 to 9,188,368 - between 2011 and 2012, while in the previous year, employment in the tourism sector - as a percentage of overall employment in the country - rose 4,3 % to 4.5% - an increase of about 31,000 jobs.

As Capsicum celebrates its tenth year in operation, Roets says, "This information, coupled with the well-established partnership between the Department of Tourism and the South African Chefs Association - and their commitment to the National Youth Chefs Training Programme (NYCTP) which provides funding for aspirant chefs who do not have the means for tertiary education - demonstrates that the culinary arts is a viable career option for South Africans."

Roets continues that with a sound grounding from a reputable institution there are numerous employment options, and not just within the hospitality industry.

"From working at various food establishments, in a hotel or catering business to product development, food styling and photography, hospitality management or a job in the wine and beverage industry, our graduates are equipped to explore several avenues. Those with entrepreneurial flair could run their own establishment or tap into international trends such as operating a mobile eatery, a stall at an artisanal market or hosting pop-up dining venues or events."

In addition to the array of positions available, chefs can enjoy many benefits. "You could have the opportunity to be part of an exciting team that's driven by creativity, passion and shared knowledge, and ultimately could set new culinary and hospitality trends. Some of our students have even gone on to work for celebrity chefs," enthuses Roets.

One of the greatest advantages for those who are professionally trained is the possibility of international travel. "Chef skills are portable - everyone needs, and usually, loves to eat so one can find employment nearly anywhere they want to go. South African chefs have a good reputation for their expertise and strong work ethic - they are able to find good positions at food establishments abroad, on cruise ships and even as private chefs on yachts."

Roets concludes that culinary arts offer the prospect of long-term job security. "The South African government has identified tourism as one of six key job-driving sectors in its New Growth Path economic strategy. This, together with our country's creativity, passion and quest to compete in the global arena will continue to drive employment opportunities."